NINA LYONS PhD CANDIDATE | MATT SMITH [SUPERVISOR]

FROM OVERLAY *TO INTERPLAY*

SUBVERTING THE MESSAGE & CREATING THE SURREAL WITH AUGMENTED REALITY
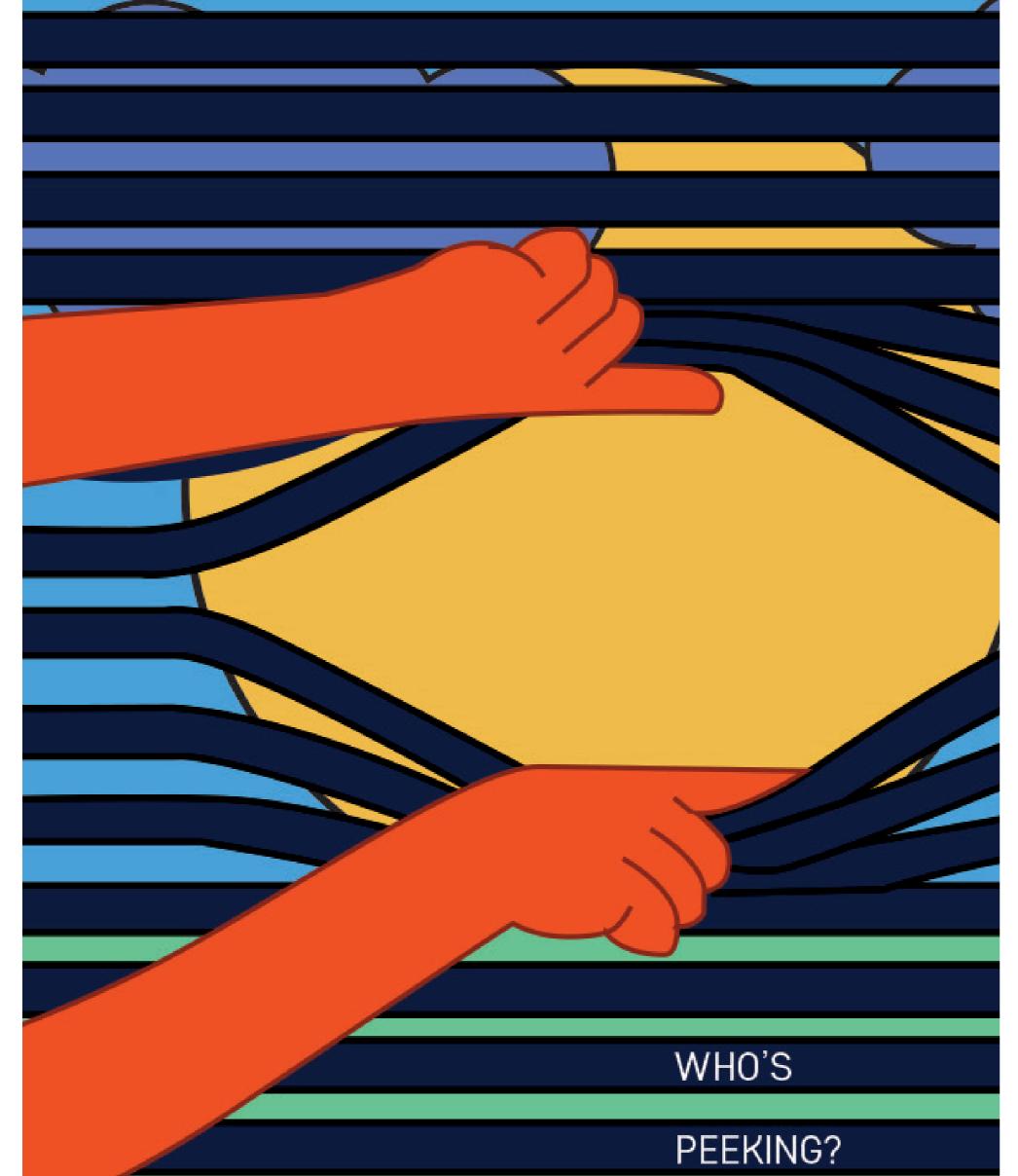
This proof of concept & subsequent book chapter explores the unique characteristics of AR as a visual communication medium while also considering the diverse and potentially powerful meanings that can be created by using it in conjunction with established visual communication devices such as posters. Utilising features in AR technology, this proof of concept examines how AR, when used in conjunction with a printed poster, can subvert the original meaning of the poster to create a new meaning for the viewer and ultimately create the surreal. This showcases the visual communication capability of AR and the opportunities available to the technology when creating enhanced experiences.

THIS PROOF OF CONCEPT UTILISES CONTENT CREATION TOOLS THAT CREATE DIEGETIC PRESENTATION WHICH IS NOT COMMONLY UTILISED IN AR SYSTEMS. IN THIS STUDY, THE VIRTUAL OVERLAY THAT BECOMES VISILBE THROUGH AR DISPLAYS DIEGETIC CONTENT THAT DISRUPTS THE MEANING OF THE POSTER HIGHLIGHTING THE POTENTIAL FOR AR AS A VISUAL COMMUNICATION MEDIUM & THE OPPORTUNITIES THAT AR, AS A MEDIUM, HAS FOR CREATING NARRATIVE.

WHO'S

PEEKING?

(2021) Nina Lyons & Matt Smith
From Overlay to Interplay: Subverting the Message and Creating the Surreal With Augmented Reality, Chapter in Handbook of Research on Contemporary Storytelling Methods Across New Media and Disciplines. (Eds: Lorena Clara Mihăeș, Raluca Andreescu & Anda Dimitriu). IGI Global, PA, USA. ISBN: 9781799866053.

RESEARCH

"Visual communication in its widest sense has a long history. When early man hunted for food, spotted the imprint of an animal in the mud, he was looking at a graphic sign. His mind's eye saw the animal itself" (Hollis, 1994). Visual communication is the process of interpreting different signs to have meaning. Some we have learned from being taught at a young age or from experience and we now intuitively understand without consciously thinking. The study of signs has developed a lot in the 100 years since the terms semiotics and semiology were first coined to describe this area of study. Recent work by van Leeuwen and Kress looks at the visual combination of signs and symbols and focus solely on visual elements (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). Kress and van Leeuwen evaluate how a sign or symbol is structured and the elements that make a sign or symbol communicate.

They have identified different elements in the construction, these are: text, image, illustration, and colour, and they refer to them as "modes of communication" (1996). They recognise these graphical elements individually and together, and how they can be used to create and communicate meaning and how each mode can affect the overall meaning of a composition.

METHODOLOGY — PROOF OF CONCEPT

The aim of the composition or modes of communication is to catch the eye. The composition needs to be strong, as Lupton (2017) explains, "our gaze is drawn to points of intrigue, from a dark hole in the middle of the road to a black cat lurking in the shadows."(p. 120) She furthers this by adding, "these visual disruptions mark potential stories embedded in a scene. Change is the basis of narrative, and change motivates the act of looking." (Lupton, 2017, p. 120).

The virtual overlay of AR is primed to add this visual disruption to create intrigue, to create new levels of interplay and subvert meaning in the printed poster.

This case study explores how AR can be added diegetically to create intrigue as well as investigating how the treatment of the virtual overlay can be presented diegetically and examine the effect it can have on the creation of new meaning or subverting the original meaning.

FURTHER RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

When the diegetic presentation of the overlay and the poster became one visual entity, a new interplay with the unchanged text was created. Considering this, we would argue that the main avenue for further detailed research would be to expand Barthes' theory, so that it might be able to cater for the virtual overlay of AR. The original theory accounts for text and image in a variety of roles. Initially it was thought that relay would cover AR, however, after conducting this study it highlighted that relay cannot be applied to the virtual overlay in the same way as it is to film. As such, the original theory needs to be expanded to cater for the possibilities of AR.

FINDINGS

It was found, that with a grounding in visual theories, the virtual overlay can be treated as a visual communication medium and inhabit the imaginary space between elements that is created through the subtle shapes made using content creation tools. This showcased that the virtual overlay when presented diegetically can subvert and create surreal messages when used in conjunction with traditional printed media, such as posters. This study showcased how the virtual overlay, when presented diegetically can subvert and create new meanings while adding intrigue to a static medium. This opens the doors for further experimentation within this new communication space. ■